11–14 Artemis, huntress born of Zeus, whom
Agamemnon
founded here* as he set sail for Troy,
hear thou my prayer, save me from harm: for thee
it is
a small thing, goddess, but so much to me.

19–26 When I make verses, Cyrnus, have them locked
away—
though if they're stolen, it will always show;
no one will choose the bad where better is to
hand,
and all will say, 'This is Theognis' verse,
from Megara': my name is famous everywhere—
but some still criticize my statesmanship.
No wonder, Polypaïdes: not even Zeus,
whether he rains or no, can please them all.

27–30 I'm well disposed to you; I'll give you good advice
that as a boy I learned from men of worth.
Be sensible, and do not stoop to shameful deeds
to seize yourself esteem, prestige, or wealth.

31–8 So that's that lesson. Next, do not consort with
knaves,
but hold fast always to the men of worth:
drink among those, and eat, and sit with those,
and seek
their favour, who have wealth and influence.
From sound men you will learn sound lessons: if
you mix
with rogues, you'll even lose what sense you
have.
Take this to heart, keep worthy company. Some
day
you'll grant I give my friends the best advice.

39–52 Cyrnus, this town's in labour—and I fear it may
bring one to birth who'll right our wicked ways.
The burghers here still keep their heads; their
leaders, though,
are heading for a catastrophic fall.
No town was ever yet destroyed by men of worth,
but when the rogues embrace unrighteousness,
corrupt the people, and uphold dishonest claims
for sake of private gain and influence,
do not expect that city to stay quiet long,
even if now it lies in utter calm,
when things like that are chosen by dishonest
men—
gain that comes hand in hand with public ill.
It leads to civil strife, bloodshed within the clan,
dictators. May we never opt for that.

53–68 (+1109–14)
Cyrnus, the town's a town still, but it has new
folk
who knew no justice previously, no laws.
They used to wear old goatskins on their flanks,
and lived
outside the town like deer. And now they are
the gentry, Polypaïdes, while yesterday's
gentry are dregs. Who can support the sight—
the men of worth reviled, the lower class esteemed?
Good stock now seeks to marry into bad;
men cheat each other, laughing at each other's
loss,
unable to distinguish good from ill.
Make none of these your true friend, Polypaïdes,
for any reason, these who live here now.
Pretend in speech to be the friend of everyone,
but share with no one anything at all
that matters, or you'll find those wretched
characters
cannot be trusted in the reckoning.
They have embraced deceit and lies and subtleties
like men past all salvation, past all hope.

69–72 Never trust, Cyrnus, or consult a low-class man
when you have some important goal in view.
To find a good man you must be prepared to go
a long way, Cyrnus, and to take great pains.

75–6 Trust few men, Cyrnus, in a weighty enterprise,
or pain past curing may be your reward.

77–8 A trusty man is worth his weight in gold and silver,
Cyrnus, when there's a crisis in the state.

79–82 You'll find few comrades, Polypaïdes, who prove
dependable when things are difficult,
men who can keep their nerve and bring
themselves to share
prosperity or hardship equally.

91–2 He's a bad comrade, Cyrnus, who, saying one
thing, thinks
another: better enemy than friend.

101–12 Let none persuade you, Cyrnus, to befriend a
knave.
What use is a rapscallion as a friend?
He'll neither get you out of trouble and distress
nor let you into any luck he has.
Doing good turns to villains is love's labour lost:
you might as well sow the grey sea with corn.
You'll reap no heavy harvest if your field's the sea,
and no reward from doing good to rogues.
They're always wanting more; and if you once fall
short,
all thanks for previous favours drains away,
whereas a man of worth appreciates a boon,
remembers, and is grateful evermore.

117–18 A false man is the hardest thing to recognize,
Cyrnus: there's nothing calls for greater care.

119–28 False gold or silver is a threat that can be checked,
Cyrnus; an expert quickly finds it out;
but if a comrade's secret disposition's false
and in his breast he has an untrue heart,
this is the basest counterfeit that God has put
before us, and it costs most pain to test.

You cannot know a man's or woman's character
until you've tried if it will bear a load,
nor can you judge as if inspecting merchandise:
so often the appearances deceive.

129–30 Don't pray for status, Polypaïdes, or wealth:
the only thing a man requires is luck.

131–2 One's parents are the greatest treasure in the world,
Cyrnus, for all who value righteousness.

133–42 No one's responsible for his own gain or loss,
Cyrnus: it is the gods that give us both,
and no man as he toils knows whether in the end
his enterprise will turn out well or ill.
Often a man who thought he was to fail succeeds,
while one who thought to be successful fails.
No man is handed everything that he desires;
it cannot pass the limits of his means.
We mortals have no knowledge, only vain belief;
the gods fix everything to suit themselves.

143–4 No man has ever cheated guest or suppliant,
Cyrnus, without the immortals taking note.

145–8 Go for a righteous life without much property
rather than wealth dishonestly acquired.
All honour, Cyrnus, is contained in honesty,
and every honest man's a man of worth.

149–50 Even an utter villain, Cyrnus, may get wealth
from Fortune, but true worth is shared by few.

151–2 Lawless behaviour, Cyrnus, is what God first gives
to villains that he means to sweep away.

159–60 Cyrnus, don't ever talk too big, for no man knows
what change another day and night may bring.

173–8 There's nothing gets a good man down like
poverty,
Cyrnus—not hoary age, nor fever chill.
Throw yourself, Cyrnus, to the monsters of the
deep
to escape it, or leap down the towering cliffs.
A man o'ercome by poverty is powerless
in speech and action, and his tongue is tied.

179–80 Cross the earth, Cyrnus, cross the broad-backed sea likewise,
to find release from painful poverty.

181–2 Better, dear Cyrnus, for a pauper to be dead
than live oppressed by painful poverty.

183–92 With horses, rams, and asses, Cyrnus, we seek out good blood, and everyone wants pedigree
to breed from; yet a man of class, if offered wealth, doesn't mind marrying from worthless stock,
nor does a woman turn a base groom down, if he be rich: she chooses money over worth.
Property's what they value. Good stock breeds from bad
and bad from good; wealth has confounded blood.
Don't be surprised then, Cyrnus, that the burghers' stock
is fading: they're diluting good with bad.

219–20 Cyrnus, don't chafe too much because the town's astir,
but walk the middle of the road, like me.

233–4 A man of worth's the witless people's citadel
and rampart, Cyrnus, yet in slight esteem.

235–6 We're looking nothing like survivors any more,
Cyrnus, but like a city doomed to fall.

237–54 For my part, I have made you wings on which to fly
across the endless sea and all the earth
with ease: you'll be at every dinner, every feast,
and many a man will have you on his lips,
and lovely lads accompanied by alto pipes
will sing of you in voices sweet and clear
and orderly. And when, down in the earth's dark nooks,
you go to Hades' house of wailing grief,
not even then in death will your fame fade, but men
will always cherish your immortal name,

Cyrnus, as you roam over all the land of Greece
and all the islands of the teeming sea,
not riding then on horseback; no, the
violet-wreathed
Muses will speed you by their noble grace.
Future men likewise, all who have an interest,
will sing of you, while earth and sun exist.
And yet from you I cannot get some slight respect;
you lie to me as if I were a child.

299–300 When ill befalls a man, none wants to be his
friend,
Cyrnus, though he be of the same womb born.

319–22 A good man, Cyrnus, has a firm and constant
mind,
and holds fast in good fortune and in ill,
but if God gives a base man livelihood and wealth,
the fool can't stop his baseness coming out.

323–8 Never destroy a friendship on some trivial ground,
Cyrnus, believing wicked slanderous tongues.
If one were angry with one's friends at every lapse,
there'd be no friends, no mutual harmony;
for lapses are inherent in our mortal world,
Cyrnus. Only the gods deny them space.

329–30 With planning, even a slow man overtakes the swift,
Cyrnus, helped by the justice of the gods.

331–2 Be calm, like me, and walk the middle of the road,
Cyrnus: give neither side the other's due.

333–4 Don't help an exile, Cyrnus, hoping for reward.
Even back home he's not the man he was.

335–6 Don't fuss too much. The mid-position's always
best,
Cyrnus. You'll still have class: that's hard to
steal.

337–40 Zeus grant I may repay my friends, who are so
kind,
Cyrnus, and even more my enemies.
I'd feel then like a god on earth, could I but get
revenge before my appointed death-day comes.

355–60 Hold firm amid these setbacks, Cyrnus, as before
when fortune sent you good things you rejoiced,
and just as after good luck bad luck came, so seek
to emerge once more by praying to the gods.
Don't let it show too much. It's bad to let it show;
you have few sympathizers for your plight.

361–2 A man's heart dwindles, Cyrnus, when disaster strikes,
but when he gets revenge it grows again.

367–70 +1183–4
There's no man, Cyrnus, that the sun's rays look upon
who is not with some criticism tagged,
but I can't understand the city's attitude:
they're hostile whether I do right or wrong.
Yes, plenty criticize me, both good men and base,
but not one of the fools can match my style.

371–2 Don't ply the goad and force me, Cyrnus, to the yoke,
pulling me too far into comradeship.

409–10 No greater treasure, Cyrnus, will you leave your sons
than modesty, which clings to men of class.

411–12 Cyrnus, that friend is held inferior to none
who is endowed with both good sense and means.

429–38 It's easier to beget and rear a man than put
good sense in him. No one has yet devised
a way to make a fool wise, or a bad man good.
If God had granted the Asclepiads*
this power, to cure men's baseness and their blighted wits,
they would be earning many a handsome fee.
If man's mind could be crafted and put into place,
no son of worthy sire would be a knave:
he'd heed his words of wisdom. But one cannot teach
a scoundrel to become respectable.

1101–2 +539–40
Whoever counselled you about me and advised
forsaking my companionship, this man,
dear Cyrnus, is but forging shackles for himself,
unless my judgement's clouded by the gods.

541–2 Cyrnus, I fear that lawlessness may kill this town
as it did the brutish Centaurs long ago.

543–6 I'll have to judge this case exactly by the rule,
Cyrnus, and give both sides their equal shares
with help from seers and auguries and altar flames,
so that no error puts me in disgrace.

549–53 The silent messenger* stirs woeful war to life,
Cyrnus, from yon high look-out blazing forth.
So saddle up your steeds: I think they'll meet the
foe—
it is not far—already on the road.

631–2 The man whose head can't rule his heart is ever
found
in trouble, Cyrnus, and perplexity.

653–4 May I have heaven's favour and the gods' good
will,
Cyrnus. I crave no status otherwise.

655–6 At your misfortune, Cyrnus, all of us feel pain;
but troubles not one's own are soon forgot.

805–10 An envoy sent to Delphi, Cyrnus, must take care
to be more true than scale or rule or lathe,
that man to whom the priestess of the god imparts
the oracle from out the wealthy shrine.
Any addition would negate the remedy,
and any cut would be a sacrilege.

811–14 I've suffered something worse than—well, not
ugly death,
but bitterer, Cyrnus, than all other fates.
My friends have let me down. So I must go and
try
my enemies, to see how they're disposed.

815–17 An ox's mighty hoof upon my tongue prevents
my currying favour, though I know the art,

Cyrnus. And after all, what destiny ordains
that one must suffer, cannot be escaped.

819–20 Cyrnus, we've reached a crisis oft foreseen in
prayers.
Now may one death embrace the two of us.

821–2 There's little place for people who show disrespect
to parents, Cyrnus, when they're getting old.

833–6 It's all gone to the dogs, to ruin, and we can't
blame any of the immortal blessed gods,
Cyrnus. It's human violence, graft, and insolence
have cast us from success to misery.

895–6 Sense is the best thing that a man can have in him,
Cyrnus; insensibility the worst.

897–900 Cyrnus, if God were angry at each little thing
with mortals, knowing each man's private
thoughts
and all his actions, then it would go hard for us,
both righteous and unrighteous men alike.

1027–8 Disaster's easy to achieve in men's affairs,
Cyrnus, but hard the skill of making good.

1037–8 It is the hardest thing to cheat a man of worth,
Cyrnus. This view I came to long ago.

1103–4 Lawlessness broke Magnesia, Smyrna, Colophon,
Cyrnus: it's bound to break you people too.

1133–4 Cyrnus, while friends are by, let's check the ill at
start
and seek to cure the ulcer ere it grows.

1171–6 Sense, Cyrnus, is the gods' best gift to mortal men:
sense truly has the tabs on everything.
Lucky's the man who has it—far to be preferred
to accursed lawlessness or too much wealth.
That is a bane to mortals, there is nothing worse.
From such things, Cyrnus, comes all misery.

1177–8 Could you touch not base deeds and stay
untouched by them,
Cyrnus, you might best know the good man's
life.

1179–80 Cyrnus, respect the gods and fear them. This is what
restrains a man from impious word and deed.

1197–1202
'O Polypaïdes, I hear the crane's shrill cry
telling men that it's time to plough and sow.
It stabs my melancholy heart with pain, to think
my flower-bright farmland lies in other hands
and I've no mules at work pulling the crooked plough

. . . . .

1217–18 Perhaps one day he'll moan, and we'll sit by and grin,
Cyrnus, rejoicing in our own success.

1219–20 Cyrnus, it's difficult to trick one's enemy,
but easy for a friend to cheat a friend.

1221–2 Mortal men's calculation, Cyrnus, tends to make
many a slip when judgement is disturbed.

1223–4 There's nothing, Cyrnus, more unjust than wrath: it gives
the heart that shelters it ill recompense.

1225–6 There's nothing sweeter, Cyrnus, than a goodly wife.
I can attest it: test it out yourself.

1353–5 Bitter and sweet is love, desirable and cruel
to young men, Cyrnus, till it be fulfilled.
If one succeeds, then it is sweet; but if pursuit
finds no success, there is no sharper pain.

Theognis

12 *founded here*: at Megara. The shrine of Artemis there (like that of Zeus, Hera, and Dionysus on Lesbos) was reputed to have been founded by Agamemnon at the time of the Trojan War.

432 *the Asclepiads*: the doctors' union, named after Asclepius the god of healing.

549 *The silent messenger*: a beacon fire.